

## MEDICINE TODAY

Current comment on medical progress, reviews of selected books and periodic literature, by contributing editors

**The Editor:** This new venture is intended to be an extension of the editorial section of *CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE*. That there is a need for it seems manifest by the expressed opinions of our advisors. In order to distribute the tremendous amount of work necessary to make the effort worth while, the broad field of medicine has been more or less arbitrarily divided some forty ways with one or more contributors to each subject.

Clear, brief comments of editorial or high-class textbook character on points in medical progress; reviews of books and magazine articles on any subject, from any source, and other matters which in the opinion of the contributing editor, whose name appears at the end of his comment, are of importance or significance to all physicians, is the chief aim of this venture.

Members interested in assisting to make this department serve its useful purpose are invited to communicate with the editor.

### DERMATOLOGY AND SYPHILOLOGY

**T**HE importance of a thorough knowledge of syphilis in the practice of medicine has been stressed by many leading teachers. This disease is so common, and at the same time so protean in its manifestations, that many of the tragic errors in practice are due to the failure of an early diagnosis or to insufficient treatment. The subject is so broad that a definite specialty has developed around it in spite of the fact that its manifestations concern alike the general practitioner and the various specialists. Syphilis has been studied and written about since the fifteenth century at least, but the most striking advances have all occurred during the present century, starting with the recognition of the causative organism and continuing with the development of the Wassermann reaction as an aid in its diagnosis and the various arsenicals in its treatment. During the past few years, intensive research in laboratories and clinics devoted to the study of syphilis has resulted in an extraordinary improvement in our methods of diagnosis and treatment. These advances have all been published in medical periodicals, but the material is so scattered and so difficult to evaluate that only those who are specially interested in the subject have been able to keep pace with them. There has been no single text which presented the entire subject in a modern manner. This gap has been filled by Stokes'<sup>1</sup> book on syphilis. This book is a complete compilation of our present knowledge of syphilis augmented by a huge personal experience under the most favorable conditions for scientific study. The subject is covered in a single volume with painstaking thoroughness clarified by an orderly arrangement that makes it possible to study any particular phase that is of particular interest. The availability of the material is greatly augmented by the employment of clean-cut tables wherever they are practicable, by numerous good illustrations, for the most part photographs, and by a full and accurate index. Many case histories are used to point out possible pitfalls and to illustrate particular phases.

1. Stokes: *Modern Clinical Syphilology*, 1926 (Saunders).

In addition to taking up all the angles of scientific diagnosis and treatment, Stokes includes discussions of his own methods of dealing with the patient from the personal standpoint under given circumstances. This is a phase that is often difficult and one that is rarely discussed in textbooks and monographs. His particular methods may not always agree with our own ideas on the subject, but at least show us one acceptable path. Some of the details, especially in regard to treatment will probably require revision with passing years, but Stokes has presented modern knowledge of syphilis in a form that makes it readily available to everyone. His book is a milestone in the teaching of modern medicine.

HOWARD MORROW.

**T**HE erysipelas-like eruption among fish handlers, first described by Rosenbach in 1884, has been recently restated by Klauder, Righter, and Harkins.<sup>1</sup> It is frequently seen in workers exposed to fish (particularly shell fish), game, and cheese. Gilchrist traced the cause to bites by crabs and cuts from their shells. It is also observed in veterinarians accidentally inoculated through a needle prick when immunizing swine with the serum of swine sickness, and in persons handling diseased pork. There occurs a purplish-red spreading erythema limited almost exclusively to the hands and wrists which lasts all the way from five days to several weeks. Ordinary erysipeloid does not spread far and the symptoms are mild, but when due to infection from swine may involve the hands, forearms and arms, and there may be considerable, painful swelling with lymphangitis and enlargement of regional lymph nodes. Klauder and his co-workers studied one thousand cases among commercial salt-water fishermen. This disease is the chief cause of disability among fishermen who work in fish ponds and handle live salt-water fish. In spite of all treatment the usual period of disability has been from two to three weeks. The authors found that the causative organism was identical with the bacillus of swine erysipelas, and they prepared a serum which they injected intramuscularly with very encouraging results.

H. N. Cole and Chambers<sup>2</sup> found that after three or four weeks of daily injections (in doses corresponding to 5.5 mg. of mercury) the total daily excretion averaged about 1 mg. of mercury. Only one-sixth of the injected mercury is excreted. The remainder accumulates at the rate of about 4.5 mg. a day. With inunctions the excretion rises progressively so that it is about four times higher at the end of the fourth week than at the end of the first week of treatment. At the end of the fourth week of inunctions the excretion is almost double that of the injections. The injections act more promptly, but the inunctions are presumably more powerful. This corresponds with our clinical experience. In

<sup>1</sup> Klauder, J. V.; Righter, L. L., and Harkins, M. J.: A Distinctive and Severe Form of Erysipeloid Among Fish Handlers, *Archives of Derm. and Syph.*, December, 1926, Vol. 14, No. 6, p. 662.

<sup>2</sup> Excretion of Mercury After Intramuscular Injection of Mercuric Bromide, Inunction and Rectal Suppositories, *Archives of Derm. & Syph.*, December, 1926, Vol. 14, No. 6, p. 683.